

A History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia, 1901-2011



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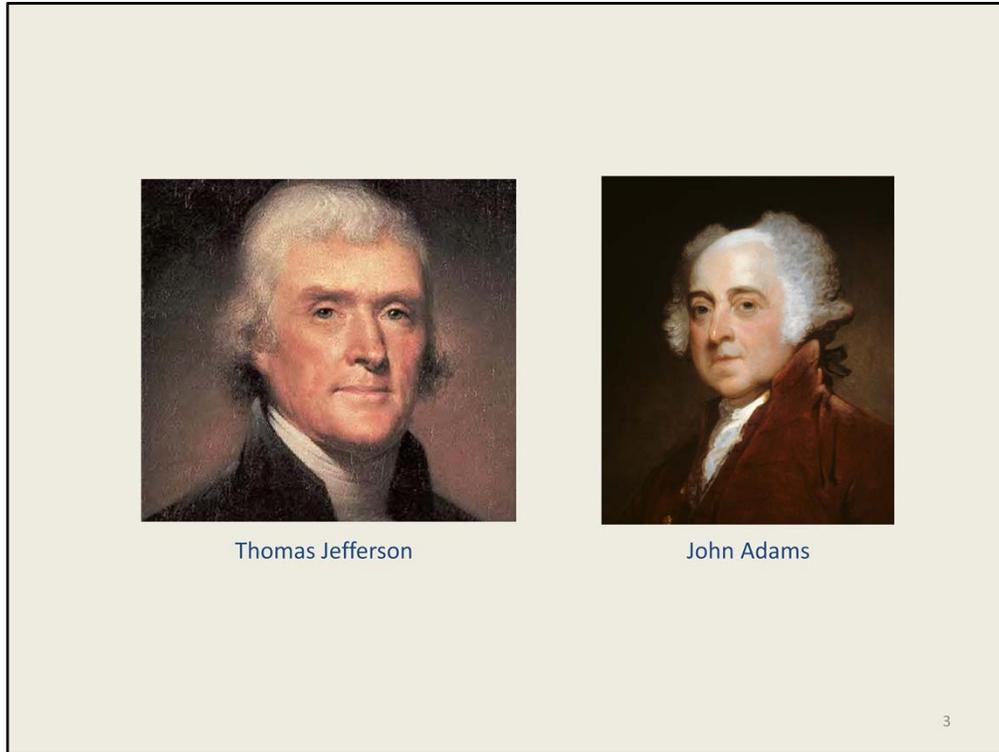
The History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia Project took root during a conversation I had in January 2007 with Morton C. Wilhelm, M.D., the Joseph Helms Farrow Professor Emeritus in Surgical Oncology. Dr. Wilhelm (M.C.), a volunteer in Historical Collections, was writing a biography of a prominent cancer physician, now deceased. We began reflecting on the cancer program at the University of Virginia (UVa) and how many individuals had played significant roles in its development over the years. We realized that many of our friends and colleagues in this group had died and that, for the most part, their contributions to UVa's cancer program had not been recorded. Discussions with others about this lack of an historical record led to the formation of a committee to explore the possibility of writing a book which would describe the evolution of the treatment of cancer at UVa over the years and provide context for it. The committee was enthusiastic and agreed to help. The members of the committee, who made time for this project in their very busy schedules, were a brain trust of UVa's stellar surgeons, physicians, researchers, and nurses in the field of cancer care. We were cognizant of the fact that the committee members we selected were highly placed in the hospital and School of Medicine hierarchy and extremely well connected. We set as our goal a representation of each discipline involved in the multi-faceted treatment of cancer. The work was done under the auspices of Historical Collections, which had some major implications for our small department. The magnitude of the task soon became evident.



M.C. and Janet Pearson, Historical Collections Assistant, reviewed all the back issues of *The Draw Sheet and Link*, news bulletins of the University of Virginia Hospital, which were an excellent source of dates and events. Back issues of the *Helix*, a University of Virginia news magazine, and the *University of Virginia Medical Alumni News Letter* (which went through various title changes over the years) provided excellent material about physical changes, program initiatives, and personal and professional advances in UVa's approach to cancer care. The papers of the UVa Presidents and Boards of Visitors were also treasure troves and extensively mined. All of this material was essential, but we realized that many of our current and recently retired faculty had a wealth of facts and stories waiting to be told. We, therefore, embarked upon the journey of conducting video-recorded interviews with 25 individuals. The melding of technical expertise, interview schedules, and interview format took some time to evolve, but it became obvious as the interviews progressed that the material received was invaluable, as was the realization that each of the individuals had contributed to the development of an outstanding cancer program at UVa. M.C. also discovered his latent talent as an expert interviewer. We hired a videographer for the interviews who, with our assistance, turned each one into a polished piece of history. As material accumulated, it became obvious that a dedicated writer was a necessity for the project to succeed. We decided early on, with the sanction of the committee, that we would not produce a coffee-table book; ours would be a more scholarly publication, true to the historical record, with footnotes. We also would strive to make the book approachable and oriented to both the cancer care providers and the lay audience. Surprising as it may seem, there is no written history of the UVa Health System, which has been part of UVa from the inception of the university in 1825, so we knew we were creating an important piece of that larger narrative.

We thought it would be a good idea – for reasons both personal and professional – to make Dr. Wilhelm, an M.D., one of the authors, and have someone more humanities-oriented as a co-author. Henry (Hal) Sharp, who had worked in Historical Collections for a number of years, creating text for Web exhibits and UVa Hospital's Centennial exhibits as part of his responsibilities, and who was a published author, was finishing his dissertation and our project fit into his schedule. His background with medical material, established friendship with and the support of Historical Collection staff, and ability to gather facts and tell a story seemed just right. Hal received his Ph.D. degree from UVa just as he was finishing the bulk of the written portion of the project. He left for Paris and Sicily for jobs that were waiting for him. (A tough life, but someone has to do it, I guess!) We were again very fortunate. Victoria Meyer was already working as a graduate student assistant in Historical Collections, while finishing her dissertation in medical history. Victoria received the material written by Hal and edited it for consistency and flow. She also edited the other contributions and wrote the book's introduction. Two doctoral dissertations were written and defended during the creation of the book, which had an impact on our projected timeline for the project.

While first Hal and then Victoria were engaged in writing and editing the book, they were not available for other Historical Collections work. Historical Collections staff, Sonya Coleman, Historical Collections Specialist, Janet, and I, in addition to our usual responsibilities, added tasks for the project to our workload. All departmental staff contributed immensely to the completion and success of telling and illustrating the story of the history of cancer care at the University of Virginia.



As with everything at the University of Virginia, we invoked Thomas Jefferson. For those of you not indoctrinated in UVa's legacy, TJ is the gentleman on the left! The title for the Introduction is "A Legacy of Care: Cancer and Jefferson." We did not have to stretch to make the connection. After a decade of estrangement, former presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were enjoying their recently renewed friendship in the summer of 1813 when tragedy struck. Adams wrote Jefferson with devastating personal news. His only daughter Abigail "Nabby" Smith had died from breast cancer on 9 August, at the age of forty-nine. Adams described his daughter during the three years of her illness as "a monument to Suffering and to Patience." Abigail Adams was more forthcoming in her letter to Jefferson about the personal devastation caused by the loss of their daughter to a malady which her husband could not even bring himself to name.

Cancer had been known for more than twenty-four centuries by the time of Nabby Smith's diagnosis and in our book we briefly trace the various understandings and treatments of the disease in its diverse forms. John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 16 August 1813, in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 2:366.



University of Virginia Hospital, Charlottesville, VA, 1901

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Our story of cancer and the University of Virginia begins with a farmer from Rockingham County, Virginia, who, in the late summer of 1907, took a lengthy trip over the Blue Ridge Mountains to Charlottesville to seek relief from the pain in his jaw. He came hoping that the new, modern UVa hospital, which had opened its doors in 1901, would help him. The ledger of the UVa Hospital reveals that cancer was among the first diseases treated at the institution. The first of these patients was the farmer from Rockingham. His tumor, a sarcoma of the lower jaw, was excised surgically and he left shortly after the operation. He was back nine days later for a more drastic treatment: "removal of the ½ lower jaw." Thirteen days later he was discharged, his condition "improved." His fate, however, was sealed.

Base Hospital 41
Saint Denis, France,
1918



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We discovered that World War I was the direct impetus for propelling UVa into the radium age. A number of University Hospital physicians and nurses staffed the military Base Hospital 4, established during the war at Saint Denis, France, a suburb of Paris. During their service, they gained exposure to the work of the Parisian scientific community, and intensive wartime experiences with 'roentgenology'—the field that became radiology and radiotherapy—provided them the skills to pursue these advances at home. When Base Hospital 41's Surgeon-in-Chief and its Superintendent of Nurses returned to UVa for the fall session of 1919, it only took a few months for them to perform the first application of radium at the University Hospital, to a cervical case. Shortly thereafter, a UVa surgeon applied radium surgically in a case of carcinoma of the uterus so advanced as to be considered inoperable.



Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center



Virginia State Senator, Emily Couric

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In addition to capturing the history of cancer care from the opening of the UVa hospital in 1901, we wished to bring the history into the 21st century and connect it with the present and future, an opportunity presented with the opening of the first, free-standing cancer center at UVa, the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center (ECCCC), dedicated in February 2011. We had our target date for completion of the project, a strong motivator! We asked Drs. George A. Beller and Peyton T. Taylor, Jr. to write the conclusion for the book, "Genesis and Fruition." Dr. Beller, a renowned cardiologist, was instrumental in raising funds for and championing the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center, built in honor of his late wife, an admired Virginia state senator, who died of pancreatic cancer. Dr. Taylor, the Medical Director of the UVa Cancer Center, was actively involved in every decision made concerning the ECCCC, from its planning to its opening for patient care.

HISTORY OF CANCER CARE
@ the University of Virginia

Overview

Three years ago, a brain trust of stellar physicians, researchers, and nurses came together in acknowledgment of the need for a recorded history of cancer care at the University of Virginia. We are pleased to announce the completion of *A History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia, 1901-2011*, a book tracing the evolution of UVA's program from its inception to the advent of the Emory Coussios Clinical Cancer Center. This book provides vast insight into the teamwork, dedication, courage, and skill—as well as luck—which was necessary for the Cancer Center to exist today. Twenty-five oral history interviews were conducted in the course of researching the book, and are included with the book or may be viewed in the audio section of this website. Written by Henry K. Sharp, Ph.D., and Morton C. Wilhelm, M.D., the Joseph Henry Farrow Professor Emeritus in Surgical Oncology, University of Virginia School of Medicine. Abridged versions of each chapter are available on this website.

The volume has a two-part Conclusion by George A. Beller, M.D., the Ruth C. Heed Professor of Cardiology, Cardiovascular Division, UVA Health System and Peyton T. Taylor, Jr., M.D., the Richard H. and Louise R. Crockett Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Virginia School of Medicine, founding director of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at UVA, and the Associate Medical Director of the University of Virginia Cancer Center.

Historical Collections staff members contributed many hours actively involved in every aspect of the UVA History of Cancer Care Project since its inception, including doing research in the archives, editing, finding photos, creating the index and bibliography, and proofreading.

The members of the History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia, 1901-2005, Committee proved to be a wonderfully involved and committed group and we are grateful for their guidance and support: Robert W. Carrell, M.D., Diane O. Cole, M.P.H., Mary E. Gibson, Ph.D., Jay Y. Gillemwater, M.D., Gerald Goldstein, M.D., Sharon L. Hooper, M.D., John A. Jank, Sr., M.D., Ph.D., Josh Eckertkamp-Koen, M.S.L.S., Daniel N. Mohler, M.D., Thomas J. O'Leary, Ph.D., Peyton T. Taylor, Jr., M.D., Munsey S. Wilkey, M.D., and Morton C. Wilhelm, M.D.

The individuals who agreed to be interviewed and whose stories and memories were invaluable to the historical narrative of cancer care at UVA: Robert W. Carrell, M.D., David Cabell-Gardner, M.S.W., Diane O. Cole, M.P.H., Milton T. Edgerton, M.D., Jay Y. Gillemwater, M.D., Gerald Goldstein, M.D., Kenneth E. Greer, M.D., Sharon L. Hooper, M.D., John A. Jank, Sr., M.D., Ph.D., Theodore E. Keats, M.D., Robert E. McLaughlin, M.D., James M. Larner, M.D., Stacy

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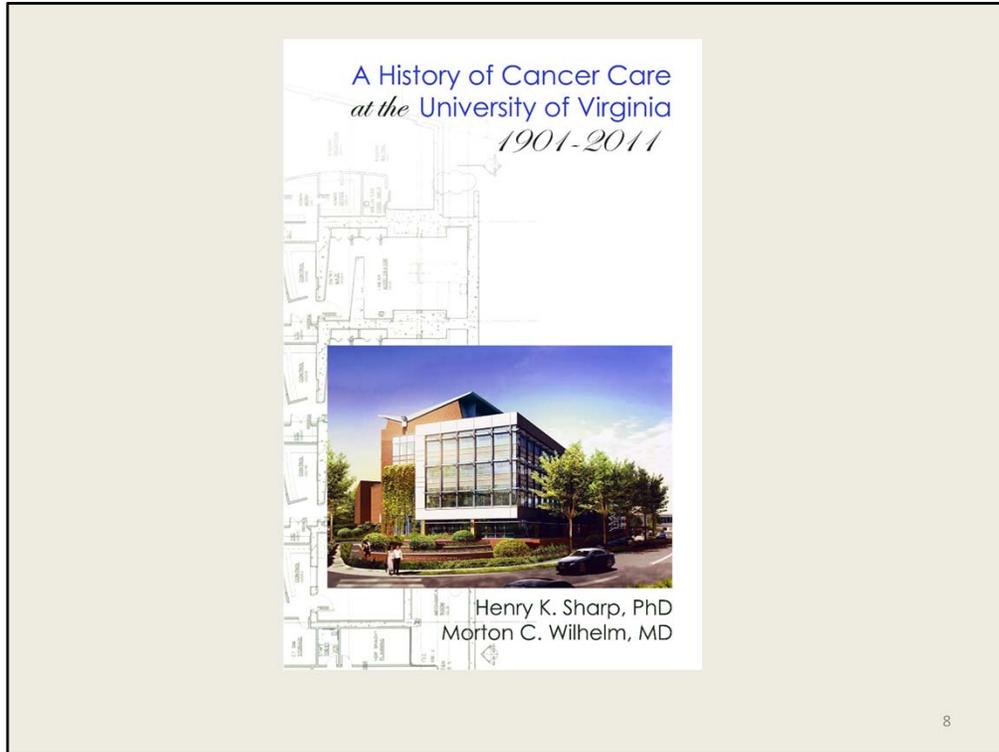
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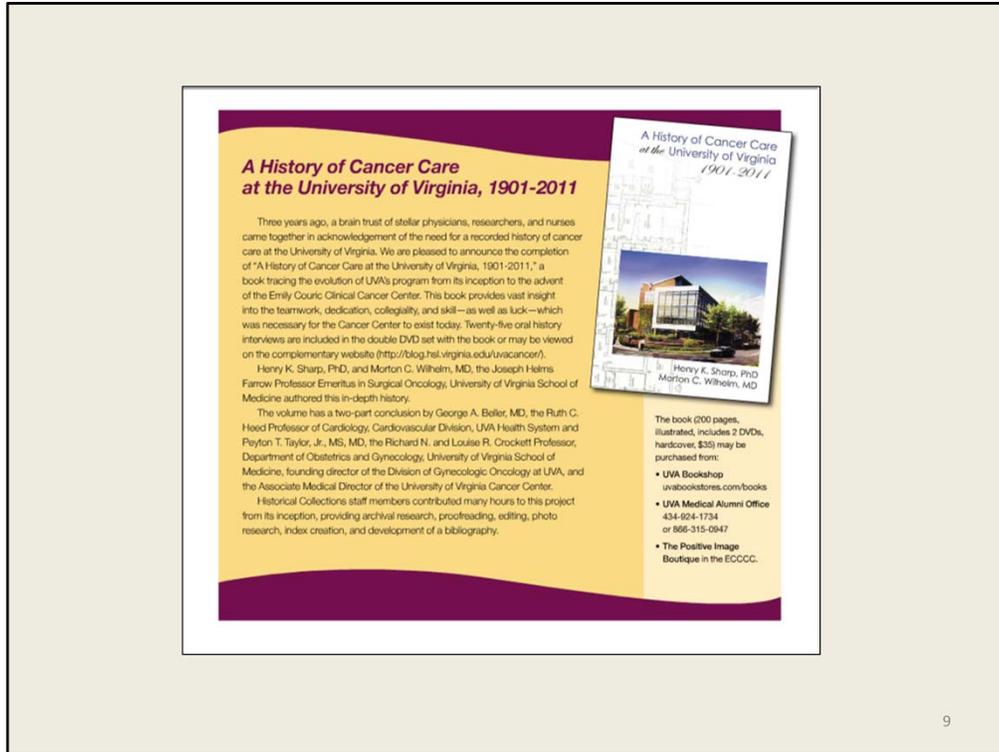
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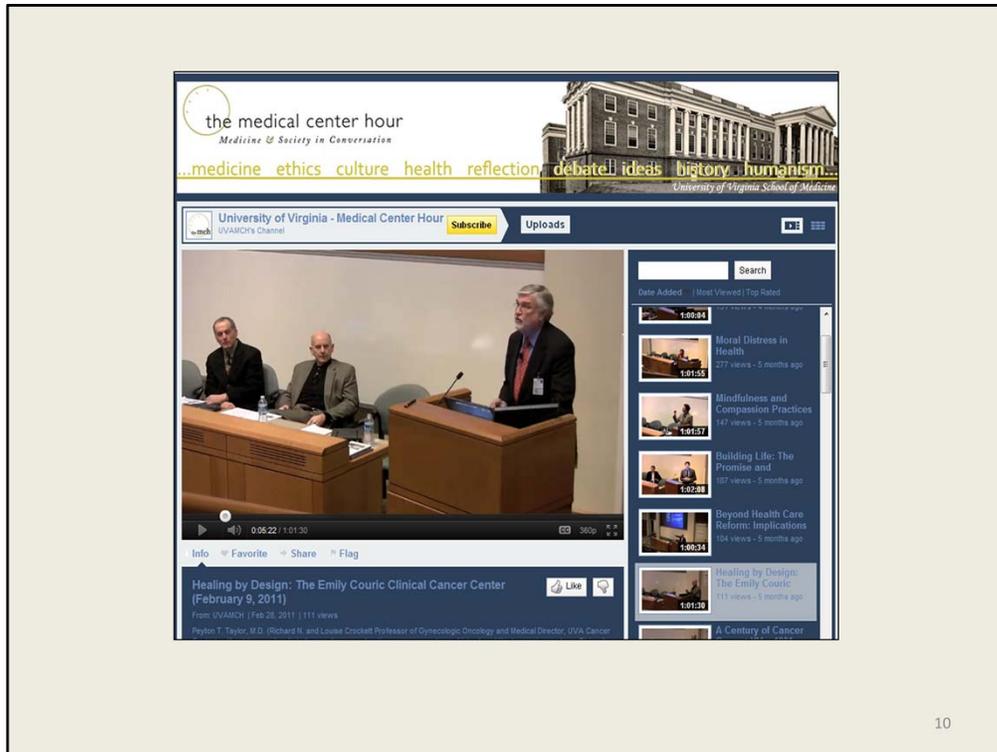
Creating a website to complement the book was planned from the inception of the project; we later broadened our vision for the web piece to include the video interviews. Each Historical Collections staff member was involved in the content editing process of the book and the website - both of which went through numerous drafts. Sonya assumed responsibility for the website's creation.



She also designed the front and back covers for the book when we deemed the designs suggested by the printer uninspiring. HC staff created and proofed the index and the bibliography, and found and sized all the illustrations. We worked with an outside printer, a new experience for us, but retained copyright for the University of Virginia. For added value we included the 25 video interviews on two DVDs in sleeves attached to the front and back covers of the book. We have been thanked by researchers for making this primary material so easily accessible. The University of Virginia Bookstores agreed to carry the book, *A History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia, 1901-2011*, and feature it both in the physical store on the "UVa Authors" shelf and on the website under the "Books about UVa" section.



The University of Virginia Medical Alumni Association prominently featured information about the book on the back cover of the Spring 2011 issue of *Medical AlumNews*, whose feature story was “A Monument to Curing and Caring: The Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center” (<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/5c664362#/5c664362/48>). The UVA Bookstore reduced its normal percentage fee from 40% to 20% to handle our book. The UVA Medical Alumni Association agreed to only charge us the postage costs for orders it receives.



Two presentations in February 2011 for the 2010/2011 Medical Center Hour (MCH) season were timed to coincide with the publication of the book. On February 2, Dr. M.C. Wilhelm was the main speaker for “A Century of Cancer Care at UVa, 1901-2011,” and the Director of the UVa Cancer Center, Michael J. Weber, M.D., was the commentator. The “Century” in the title of the talk was not actually true, it should have been 110 years, but century, cancer, and care were alliterative. On February 9, the speakers for “Healing by Design: The Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center,” were Peyton T. Taylor, Jr., M.D.; the Design Principal of ZBFArchitects; and the Senior Landscape Architect for the project. The three had worked very closely together to ensure that every detail of the ECCCC’s building and grounds promoted healing by design. These back-to-back presentations on cancer care at UVa were as synergistic as we had hoped when planning the companion talks. For both of these MCH presentations, the UVa Bookstores sold the book following the talks and the authors were present to sign. Both talks are online and may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/uvamch>. We were also fortunate to have local TV and radio coverage.



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From its inception in January 2007 to its completion in February 2011, the History of Cancer Care at the University of Virginia Project topped the list of projects in Historical Collections' annual work plans and pushed some of the other initiatives further down. The good news is that our hard work on this time-intensive, multi-year project will, hopefully, be rewarded. All proceeds from the sale of the book support Historical Collections.